

*Insight* aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

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## Benefits of Safety Audits

Most Australian organisations over a certain size incorporate a regular safety auditing program as part of their safety management systems. As outlined in our [July 2016 issue of Insight](#), these auditing programs should look beyond mere compliance to achieve more valuable outcomes for the organisation. This issue, we explore some of the benefits of regular safety auditing.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the first and foremost benefit to be gained from a well-run safety auditing program is the prevention of harm to workers. As it is a legislated requirement to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, compliance with legal obligations is also supported.

The second benefit to an organisation is an ongoing improvement to the management of safety. The underlying purpose of auditing is to identify problems before they have a detrimental impact on workers and the organisation, however this process should never be solely about identifying a missed or poorly managed hazard; it must stretch beyond that to also identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation’s safety management system (SMS). An audit which fails to identify problems with the SMS can only prevent the safety incidents of today, not the ones that will inevitably develop later as a result of systemic failures. Conversely, an audit which extends beyond merely



noting hazards and also scrutinises the operation and effectiveness of the overall SMS will assist in achieving continual improvement in safety management.

Thirdly, a good auditing process has the capacity to identify potential problems before they arise, thus short-circuiting impending harm to workers and loss/damage/cost to the organisation. This is where the experience and qualifications of dedicated or third-party auditing personnel come into their own, as without specialist knowledge it can sometimes be difficult to imagine the full range of consequences that could result from what might seem at first glance to be a trivial issue.



Finally, although frequently seen as a cost to the business, dedicating sufficient organisational resources to an effective safety auditing program can benefit the organisation's bottom line. A well-conducted safety audit provides evidence-based recommendations for change to improve the management of health and safety. This not only saves the organisation from the costs of a potentially higher rate of safety incidents, but also prevents wastage of resources on ineffective interventions into the management of safety.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

## SNG Meeting Report – Workplace Health: How do you put the 'H' back into WHS

During August Queensland Rail hosted the quarterly Safety Networking Group session.

Roslyn Miller, a Senior Advisor within WHSQ's Healthy Workers Initiative presented on 'Workplace Health – How do you put the 'H' back into WHS?'

The presentation considered what is the return on the investment for funds spent on workplace health initiatives, with International research indicating an average return of \$5 for every \$1 spent.

WHSQ's research has been drawn from data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics, with comparative data across the agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, transport and public administration industry groups. The data was very interesting with a number of modifiable lifestyle risk factors such as physical activity, smoking, weight, alcohol intake being above the national average



The group explored the success of the Wellness program at Seqwater, and number of the SNG members shared the lessons learnt from their current wellness programs.

Contemporary research is showing that an integrated approach into the core business activities and systems of an organisation produces better results for the business. Work health and wellbeing programs / initiatives take into consideration the impacts that the work environment and the type of work can have on the health of workers, and provide activities or initiatives that are designed to make *healthy* choices the *easy* choices for workers. This type of initiative is becoming more important in modern workplaces as businesses endeavour to reap the benefits of a healthy workplace.

Mechanisms to achieve this include strategies such as:

- integrate health and wellbeing information into other health and safety communications and toolbox meetings





- review OHS policies and processes to include worker health and wellbeing issues, such as identifying hazards and managing risks
- provide information about the interaction between health behaviours and relevant industry issues, such as fatigue management, unhealthy weight or lack of fitness for work.

One of the key messages focuses on the idea that workplace health and wellbeing programs are a long term strategy, not a short term initiative – it can take time to see benefits of reduced absenteeism, injuries and workers' compensation claims. In the short term what is typically seen is an increase in job satisfaction and productivity, while in the intermediate timeframe there will usually be better employee engagement and team cohesiveness.

When engaging with senior management is important to highlight the extended timeframe of when results can be expected to be achieved (and include this information with any business case).

Roslyn advocated the use of WHSQ's five step program (Management Commitment, Wellness Planning, Needs Assessment Action Plan & Evaluation) and the use of WHSQ online Organisational Systems Benchmarking Tool. She also provided information on a number of resources to assist organisations with proactive prevention strategies.

The next Safety Networking Group function will be in November 2016.

*ABOUT THE SNG:*

*In 2005 QRCM founded the Safety Networking Group for senior safety professionals working in the greater Brisbane metropolitan area. QRCM continues to coordinate and*

*arrange for speakers to present at quarterly meetings and discuss information on contemporary WHS issues. Group members also share information from their workplaces or industries, which other members frequently find interesting and useful.*

*More information on the Safety Networking Group can be found on our website. Senior safety professionals contemplating attending meetings in Brisbane can contact QRCM to express an interest.*

## Business Continuity and Health and Safety

The Safety Networking Group session also included a presentation on the interrelation between Business Continuity, Emergency & Safety.

The presentation considered common terminology and attempted to clarify the terms and their application:

### *Local Disaster Management*

Local Disaster Management is generally Local Government based with the aim of ensuring safer and more resilient communities during community-wide disaster events, by the identification and implementation of measures for the prevention, preparation, response and recovery to these disaster events.

*Disaster Recovery Planning* – A Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) is typically focussed on the recovery and protection of an organisation's business IT infrastructure in the event of a disaster.



*Emergency Management* – Emergency Management focusses on the actions to mitigate the damage of potential events on an organisation and provides for the safety of personnel and, if possible, property and facilities.

*Business Continuity* – Business Continuity Management provides processes and resources in order to ensure that critical functions can continue to be delivered following a business disruption event. It is essentially about ensuring the organisation can continue to function following a disruption event.

Whilst all four of these areas are inter-related, they have different emphases and should not be confused. However, in most cases, staff and particularly management may be involved in all of the above areas in the event of an incident.

An important aspect of Business Continuity Planning is to identify the organisation's critical functions so as to be able to prioritise them in any resumption activities. Critical Functions are those functions carried out within the organisation which would have a Catastrophic or Major impact on the organisation if the function was 'lost'. These differ from Key Functions, which, whilst important to the organisation, can be put on hold for a period of time. An example of this would be the contracted delivery of goods to a customer as a critical function whilst internal audits would be a key function.

With this in mind, there was further discussion of the Business Continuity role of the Health and Safety Professional within an organisation. In many cases, health and safety considerations take on a lower priority during a business disruption event, with the priority

being to recover business functions and 'get back to normal' as quickly as possible. This has the potential to expose the workers to risks not normally considered.

If the organisation's health and safety professional is included in the business continuity planning processes, this would ensure that the health and safety issues are considered, and mitigated within the business continuity phases. Further, it would allow the identification of any potentially critical functions within the WHS department that are needed during business continuity planning.

In the same way that an organisation would include a financial element with a Crisis Management Team, so should the health and safety professional play a formal role during a disruption event. Health and safety considerations and risks during a disruption event would be similar to those normally experienced within an organisation, but would be exacerbated as tasks would be carried out under extreme conditions, potentially by untrained people.

Simple examples of this include office staff moving and carrying files and furniture to set up alternate business locations, staff working long hours with the potential for fatigue, and staff multi-tasking and doing work they are not accustomed to.

Whilst it is accepted that there may be a higher level of health and safety risk during a disruption event, comprehensive planning and the implementation of some basic health and safety controls will ensure the health and safety of works during a time when health and safety can often be overlooked.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

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